

Rep. Opsommer offered the following resolution:

House Resolution No. 135.

A resolution to memorialize Congress to provide adequate funding to the United States Department of State to help ensure the efficient and timely processing of passports and associated refunds.

Whereas, New federal rules, including the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), indicate that United States citizens must now have passports to reenter this country via air from other countries, including Mexico. The federal departments responsible for processing the passports knew that such rules would cause a large increase in demand for the documents, yet did not undertake the necessary steps to meet such demand; and

Whereas, Citizens of the United States have frequently been unable to get their passports in time for trips, despite applying several months in advance and paying additional fees to expedite the process. This has resulted in thousands of cases where trips have been cancelled or rescheduled, often at significant financial loss and inconvenience to travelers; and

Whereas, This situation is the responsibility of the federal government, which put forth these new travel rules, set their implementation deadlines, and should have reasonably anticipated and planned for the increase in demand for such passports; and

Whereas, Refunds will need to be given to applicants who paid for expedited applications that still failed to reach them in a timely manner. The ability to get these refunds will need to be advertised so citizens are aware of their rights and can be reimbursed quickly; and

Whereas, The Congress must live up to its responsibility for the laws it has enacted, and must ensure that additional steps are taken so that this problem does not happen again in the future. This should include hiring additional federal employees and investing in necessary federal computer upgrades; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we memorialize Congress to provide adequate funding to the United States Department of State to ensure the efficient and timely processing of passports and associated refunds; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.